

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6829

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2576

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, PO

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - DOD POSITION ON USE OF LAJES AB BY
CIVIL AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 083527

NUMBERING OF FOLLOWING COMMENTS CORRESPONDS TO PARAGRAPHS
IN REFTEL:

2. TAP HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED PRECEDENT BY SCHEDULING
REGULAR INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS AT LAJES. BY
AUTHORIZING THESE OPERATIONS, GOP HAS INCURRED OBLIGATION TO
ALLOW THIRD COUNTRY USE OF LAJES. NO THIRD COUNTRY HAS IN-
SISTED ON GOP FULFILLING THIS OBLIGATION, BUT AIR FRANCE MAY
PRESS FOR CONCORDE ACCESS. TWA AND AIR FRANCE ATTITUDES MAY
CALL ATTENTION TO LAJES, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT OTHER
SCHEDULED AIRLINES WOULD SEE SUFFICIENT COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE
IN LAJES TO PRESS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS. GOP SHOULD ALSO, BY AP-
PROPRIATE HANDLING, BE ABLE TO DIVERT TECHNICAL STOPS FROM
LAJES TO SANTA MARIA.

3.A. TWA CONTINUES TO RECOGNIZE PRIORITY OF MILI-
TARY OVER CIVILIAN OPERATIONS.

3.B. RESERVATION OF U.S. CARRIER RIGHTS TO UTILIZE
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LAJES IS MEANINGLESS GESTURE UNLESS WE ARE NOW PREPARED

TO SUPPORT TWA'S REQUEST. FAILURE TO EXERCISE OUR RESERVATION CONSTITUTES IMPLICIT ACCEPTANCE OF TWA'S UNFAVORABLE COMPETITIVE POSITION.

3.C. SHOULD GOP PERMIT THIRD COUNTRY USE OF LAJES, USG PROBABLY COULD DO LITTLE TO ALTER THAT DECISION.

3.D. IT IS POLITICALLY UNREALISTIC TO BELIEVE THAT GOP COULD TERMINATE TAP OPERATIONS AT LAJES. INDEED, GOP MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RESIST HEAVY PRESSURE FOR INCREASED TAP FREQUENCIES WHEN AZORES GAIN GREATER DEGREE OF AUTONOMY.

5. AS NOTED ABOVE, VERY FEW SCHEDULED AIRLINES WOULD HAVE LEGITIMATE COMMERCIAL REASON FOR OPERATING IN LAJES. SMALL NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS SHOULD, THEREFORE, NEITHER INTERFERE WITH MILITARY OPERATIONS NOR GENERATE REQUESTS FOR SIGNIFICANT MILITARY SUPPORT. SOVIET/WARSAW PACT AIRLINES CLEARLY HAVE NO TRAFFIC REASONS FOR REQUESTING LAJES. GOP SHOULD HAVE NO SERIOUS PROBLEM IN DENYING ANY SUCH REQUEST. SOVIET BLOC COMPANIES MAY ATTEMPT TECHNICAL STOPS, BUT GOP SHOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY DEFLECTING THESE TO SANTA MARIA. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, GOP ATTITUDES WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT SOVIET BLOC AIRCRAFT UTILIZE LAJES.

6. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT PRESSURE ON BEHALF OF TWA WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT FUTURE BASE NEGOTIATIONS, AS LONG AS INITIATION OF TWA SERVICE IS DELAYED UNTIL AFTER PORTUGUESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IN FACT, CONTRARY ARGUMENT COULD BE MADE. AZOREANS ARE VITALLY INTERESTED IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHIPELAGO'S TOURISM AND OTHER INDUSTRIES. BECAUSE OF THEIR GROWING AUTONOMY, AZORES WILL VERY LIKELY NAME THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN BASE NEGOTIATIONS. THESE REPRESENTATIVES WOULD REPORTEDLY WELCOME INCREASED COMMERCIAL SERVICE TO LAJES.

7. LOCAL PANAM OFFICE CONFIRMS THAT COMPANY HAS OPERATED CIVILIAN COMMERCIAL CHARTERS INTO LAJES DURING PAST YEARS, MOST RECENT OF WHICH WAS DECEMBER 1975. PANAM HAS REPORTEDLY RECEIVED APPROVAL FOR ANOTHER CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMERCIAL CHARTER INTO LAJES FOR JULY 1976.
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